

Sweet Love 2221

Chapter 2221: Just because she is Yun Shishi.

The older one got even more agitated under her sister's incitement. Her voice rose a few decibels as she vented her fury. "Hmph! She's got the cheek to talk about self-independence when she depends on her husband for a living! Can she even afford to stay in such a beautiful villa and have so many pretty clothes to wear if not for her husband? Doesn't she need to depend on a man to have all these, too? What right does she have, then, to criticize me for wanting to marry a rich man as well? Am I not good enough?"

Inside the kitchen, Yun Shishi caught her grumbling and furrowed her brows.

Jealousy was often what caused a conflict between women, but she was not upset at all.

When others were jealous of a person, it only affirmed one's success and fortune.

Besides, Yun Qingmiao was correct, too.

Mu Yazhe had sacrificed a lot for her, indeed. All the blessings she had right now, including Youyou, was given by the man.

She was grateful to him from the bottom of her heart and treasured what she had with him.

It was true that she felt ashamed of herself when she was with him in the past. That was why she worked very hard to be worthy of him.

Still, she knew that this was only her pride working against her. She no longer held the same thinking now.

She used to hold the notion that women should be independent before she met her husband. After being with him, she realized that the Maker did not create men and women to be equals.

Men had many natural advantages over their female counterparts, be it their physique, capability, or sense of responsibility.

In return, women were gentler and more observant than men were.

Both coexisted with interdependency.

Women should be independent, but if a man was capable and responsible enough, then she might as well learn to trust and depend on him.

A woman yearned for such reliance, and a man looked to have such trust.

Smiling to herself, she turned on the tap and proceeded to wash the dishes.

The sound of running water coming from the kitchen only heightened the negative sentiments in her older cousin, and the woman clenched her fists hard with a forlorn pout. Her mother quipped, "Can't you see that she's displaying a sense of superiority over us? She's finally enjoying a good life with a husband from a rich family. This is a classic case of a woman marrying rich because of her progeny's advantage. She must thank her two, adorable boys for her good fortune! Anyway, from what I can see,

her luck won't last long; she's no different from the nouveau riche with her arrogant attitude! She's struck it rich only because she's slightly luckier than us!"

The younger daughter also chipped in, "That's right! Poor us, we can only watch in envy at her good fortune now! Mom, I think that we've only come here to be insulted! Our cousin here appears to keep a low profile, but in reality, she's showing off her wealth to us! Her words just then were meant to take a dig at us!"

Her mother walked over and signaled for her to stop. "Alright, that's enough! Don't let her hear your words."

The older of the two sisters continued muttering indignantly. "What sis said is right, anyway! What gave our cousin the right to tell us off? What did she mean by saying that an exceptional man won't go for any girls? Well, she should look at herself first! Her husband is so exceptional; what did he see in her?!"

"I chose her simply because she's Yun Shishi!"

Mu Yazhe's voice could be heard booming from the doorway out of the blue.

The trio was caught off guard as they jerked their heads up to see the man standing at the entrance.

The door had been left ajar to begin with.

Chapter 2222: This place does not welcome you all.

The door had been left ajar to begin with.

The two lads were having fun in the snow. As the snow piled up, they, as well as their uncle, decided to split into teams for a snowball fight. Little Yichen was leading the game when his younger brother clamored for their father to join in as well. The kid wanted to form a team with him, while his older twin could partner with their uncle.

This suited Gong Jie just fine and egged his brother-in-law on.

Mu Yazhe did not join them at first but agreed subsequently. He returned to the house for a pair of gloves so that he could join their snowball fight when he chanced upon the mother-daughter trio badmouthing his wife.

He had excellent hearing and could pick up Yun Qingmiao's jealous grumbling when he passed by the door. That made him stop in his tracks and put in a strong rebuttal on behalf of his wife in front of them.

The three saw him standing at the door, sizing them up coldly with his eyes. His disgust was evident in this instance.

Meanwhile, the trio, especially the older of the sisters, looked sheepish when they realized that the man had heard their conversation.

She looked nervously at him. Her shoulders retracted in jittery as her face flushed with shame.

“Brother-in-law, w-when did you step in?” The lady hurriedly hid behind her mother out of guilt. She did not know how much of her bitter grumbling he had heard.

The man pursed his thin lips frigidly. He then approached them slowly and halted about three to four meters away. “I don’t like anyone criticizing my wife behind our backs, even if they are close relations. You gossipers are detestable.”

Somehow or another, these words sounded especially mocking and critical coming from his mouth. The older girl was overwhelmed by his menacing presence and shook a little, almost stumbling in the process.

“Brother-in-law, you’re going to spoil our cousin if you continue to be so good to her. I know that we shouldn’t be criticizing her, but she’s the one who started—”

“It’s not for you to comment on the way I treat her!” The man had a look of utter revulsion as he gave them an eviction order. “This place doesn’t welcome you all. Get lost now!”

“Brother-in-law—”

“Shut up!” His frosty gaze and firm tone brooked no opposition.

The older of the two sisters managed to curb in her defiant words which had almost burst forth from her mouth. After taking a deep breath, she looked in the kitchen’s direction again. This was when a surge of courage welled up in her. It might be her extreme jealousy or great unhappiness that made her express her begrudging thoughts there and then. “It’s so unfair! What right did she have to put herself above us?! What’s so good about her that she can enjoy a princess-treatment, while we aren’t even allowed to protest?! Besides, I didn’t say anything wrong, did I?! In what way is she better than us?! She gave birth to children at eighteen without marrying anyone! What a loose girl! What’s there to show off for a whore like her?!”

SMACK!

With a terrifying expression, the man raised his palm and slapped her face.

In his view, a man should never hit a woman. He considered those men as losers, but when Yun Qingmiao let loose those ugly words, he was so upset that he unconsciously retaliated with a slap.

He would not let anyone describe his woman with such ugly terms!

Chapter 2223: Worse Than a Dog

The man stepped forward and, with his broad palm, grabbed hold of her throat. His hand wrapped around her neck nicely, with her laryngeal joint locked tightly under his grip!

He gave a slight squeeze, and her facial expression changed at once. Yun Qingmiao’s face turned red; even the veins could be seen popping up on her temples.

“L-Let... g-go—”

Alas, his grip was too vice-like that her neck seemed about to break any time!

The woman felt like an ant under his strangling. No matter how much she struggled and fought, she could not break free of his suffocating grip! This man seemed to be serious in his desire to send her to her death with the amount of force he was exerting on her throat!

“H-Help... he-help...”

Her mother was shocked by this unexpected turn of events. She stood dumbly on the spot for a few seconds before dashing to her daughter, trying to pry her away from the man’s deadly grip. Alas, she had greatly underestimated his powerful physique. No matter how hard she hit or pried at his fingers, his hand, which was akin to an iron bolt, never loosened around her daughter’s throat.

The younger sibling, meanwhile, was too scared to move, her face completely ashen.

“Let go, please! I’m begging you... She’s going to die!”

The kitchen door suddenly opened at this juncture.

Yun Shishi emerged. She did not seem surprised by this scene and, in fact, appeared oddly calm and composed.

She watched in silence until her cousin looked about to pass out before she walked up to her man, held his wrist, and said gently, “Don’t be angry anymore. Let go now.”

The man did not relent.

“Be good, yeah?” She tiptoed and gave his cheek a kiss, which led into him finally loosening his grip.

Yun Qingmiao’s body broke away from the restraint, and with the gravity pull, she slumped to the ground.

She sat dumbly on the floor with her hands around her neck, coughing violently without stop. The redness on her neck had spread all the way to her head, and her eyeballs seemed to be in danger of popping out of their sockets. Just as she was still helplessly coughing away, she felt her throat being hurled upward again.

Panicking, she looked up and met her cousin’s frigid eyes.

The latter had grabbed hold of her collar and yanked her up from the ground. With one hand holding her up, Yun Shishi then sent a biting slap across her face with her other free hand.

A loud *SMACK!* thundered across the kitchen. The hostess had mysteriously summoned a powerful force behind her attack.

Her cousin, who had totally been caught off guard by this slap, broke into tears as her lips trembled in fear.

“I’ve been kind to you all because you are my relatives, but I’ve thought too highly of the help I gave to you three, haven’t I? A dog will still know how to wag its tail in gratitude, but what about the three of you? All of you are worse than dogs.”

Her aunt denied this, sounding disappointed and ashamed at once. “Niece, how could you say such things about us?! What do you mean by us being worse than dogs?!”

“Isn’t that the truth?!” She did not look at the older woman but continued to fix her gaze on her older cousin. Suddenly, she sniggered. “Do I need your comments on how I should live or marry? Even though your lives aren’t smooth-sailing now, do you need to come here and beg me for help like beggars? Can you say whatever you like just because you lead a poor life? That’s absurd! If you want others to respect you, you ought to have some self-respect first!”

Chapter 2224: Snowball Fight (1)

After saying that, she dumped the woman back to the floor.

Yun Qingmiao, with tears streaming down her eyes, stumbled a few steps backward and knocked into her younger sister. They had initially pegged their cousin as weak and defenseless—a frail woman whom they could easily bully—but after witnessing the fury she had unleashed on them, they realized how terrifying she could be for the first time in their lives.

“Why are you still here? Get lost now!” Yun Shishi barked a final eviction order.

Her older cousin’s shoulders heaved unsteadily a couple of times and, upon grabbing her bag, dashed out of the house without a goodbye.

“Qingmiao!”

The mother called out after her elder daughter. After exchanging a glance with her younger daughter, she cast a cautious look on Mu Yazhe, then moved to give chase to her daughter.

“Stop right there!”

Xiang Yu stopped dead in her tracks and turned her head around.

Her niece sounded a notice with a deadpan face. “Let me warn you: Don’t you harass my family, including Uncle Yehou, again. Watch your words when it comes to me too, or I won’t be kind!”

The house turned quiet suddenly.

Just as she turned around, her man caught her by the arm and took her into his arms.

“Little thing, why did you turn into such a fearsome creature without warning?”

The man cuddled her face and asked that with adoration. He found her unexpected burst of anger appealing.

She hardly lost grip of herself, so this time, the trio might have upset her a lot to give a d*mn.

While the woman was too flabbergasted by her action to speak, her man tried to coax her like a kid. Caressing her hair gently, he comforted her. “Don’t be angry anymore... C’mon, be good...”

This was too childish for her to bear, and she pushed him away wryly. “Hey, are you treating me like a puppy?”

Youyou suddenly dashed into the house and, standing at the door, asked quizzically, “Mommy, what happened? I saw those three witches storming off...” A thought came to his mind immediately, and he asked with a sinking face, “Don’t tell me that they tried to bully you?”

The corner of her lips twitched momentarily. Realizing that the father-son pair was babying her, she pushed her husband toward the door. "Alright, alright! Mommy has defeated the baddies. Why don't you two get going with your snowball fight?"

"Mommy..." The boy looked at his father sympathetically before giving his mother a kind reminder. "Well, at least give dad a pair of gloves for the game."

She looked down at her man's hands, which had gone red from the cold weather, and stuck out her tongue sheepishly. "Wait a while."

She ran to the cloakroom, took a pair of gloves, and put each on his hands for him. "Alright, you two had better run along!"

"Aren't you going to join us, mommy?"

"I'm afraid of the cold, so I won't be playing. Your daddy is more than enough." She added as an afterthought. "We'll make dumplings together after you all finish with your game."

Her son was finally at ease after seeing her cheerful disposition. Sticking out his tongue cheekily at her, he said, "Alright. Mommy can prepare the fillings first, and we'll make dumplings later." He then eagerly pulled his dad out of the house.

Yun Shishi returned to the kitchen to put the clean dishes into the dishwasher before she removed her apron. After that, she went to the balcony, leaned against the window, and quietly looked out to the garden. She managed to catch the entire game going on from her vantage point.

Soon, the father-son pair got their 'rampart' ready for the fight. They managed to build a snow heap into a sturdy fortress.

Chapter 2225: Snowball Fight (2)

Inside the garden, the four males had split into two teams. Youyou and his father were a team, while Little Yichen and his uncle were the other. By the look of things, the older twin with his uncle had the upper hand in this game.

The boy shook hands with his uncle as the latter revealed an eerie smile. The two then turned to the other team and declared, "Both of you are done for! We'll knock the hell outta you!"

The younger twin retorted defiantly, "Uncle, don't underestimate our fighting prowess! Don't celebrate too soon; my dad and I will give you a taste of defeat!"

His mother stifled a chuckle when she heard that.

Pretty soon, the father and son managed to build a sturdy snow 'fortress' with each other's help.

One thing was worth mentioning here; the younger boy had a 'flair' for snowball fights. He knew, very early, that a snow fortress would not stay up for long; hence, he went to find some discarded tiles to build a small fort before piling the snow on top of it. Even his father was impressed.

His son looked at the grown-up staring at his 'mastery work' and reminded disdainfully, "Daddy, what are you staring at? Go ready the 'ammunition'!"

The man was perturbed by his son's disdain. He gave a snort and proceeded to stoop at one side to prepare the snowballs quietly.

"Make sure the snowballs are big enough! Pat the snow to make a tight ball, or else it'll disintegrate."

After the lad got his fortress ready, he squatted down to prepare some snowballs too. He then started to lay out his plan to his father, sounding pesky. "Once we start the fight, I'll oversee the defense while you supervise the attack. I'll make the balls for you."

His father nodded like an obedient soldier as his son barked out orders like a commander who was bent on victory.

They managed to get a heap of snowballs ready within a short period.

The boy continued. "There's no need to be gentlemanly in a snowball fight. We aren't here to look good; we must kick their butts until they beg for mercy on their knees!"

Mu Yazhe could imagine how his brother-in-law would go on his knees before him and let out an evil grin.

Okay, let's fight!

Meanwhile, on Gong Jie's side, the uncle-nephew pair had barely gotten their snow fortress ready. Even though Little Yichen was a brilliant fighter, he was rather tardy and useless when it came to mapping background operations. The same could be said for his uncle.

While Youyou's team had gotten their snowballs ready after building their base, the other team had only managed to build half the fort.

Just as the uncle and nephew were debating on how to fortify their base, the father and son started their rolling attack.

A solid snowball came hurling in the air and hit Gong Jie right in the head with a *PLOP!*

The man let out a yelp before falling, face-down, to the ground, while his nephew witnessed this with wide-eyed disbelief.

Typically, a snowball would quickly disintegrate once it hit somebody. However, the father-son duo managed to make theirs firm and tough by eliminating excess moisture. Somehow, the man succeeded in packing the snow into tight balls with his crushing strength, so much so that they resembled ice balls, instead. Hence, the snowball he hurled had struck the other man's head hard without disintegrating. A snowball like this could hurt like a solid rock.

As the young man tried to get up, all along rubbing his nape ruefully, his brother-in-law sent two more snowballs swiftly in his direction. The latter was precise in his aim as the three collective shots hit him solidly on the head without missing once. The man fell to the ground again in continuous crushing defeat.

Chapter 2226: Snowball Fight (3)

Youyou held his belly and burst out laughing as he mocked his uncle. "You're a weak chicken!"

Yun Shishi could not hold it in any longer and laughed as well.

Weak chicken?!

Gong Jie stood up angrily. He was so agitated that he conveniently grabbed a pile of snow from Mu Yichen's unfinished fort. Molding it a little, he then hurled it at Mu Yazhe.

Alas, the other man nimbly stepped to the side, neatly and spectacularly avoiding it.

The snowball landed straight on Youyou and broke apart upon impact. Therefore, it did not hurt at all.

"Uncle, don't touch my fort!" cried his eldest nephew indignantly.

SMACK!

Expecting better from his nephew, he knocked his head and spoke gloomily, "They're already attacking us; what's the point of a fort?! Let's attack them, too!"

Little Yichen abandoned his fort, no longer wanting to be on defense. He grabbed a bunch of snowballs from the ground and threw them at his father.

The uncle-nephew pair threw one snowball after another at Mu Yazhe.

The flames of war began to fill the air.

Youyou turned back to hide behind their fort as he began to make snowballs nonstop. He steadily sent out the snowballs onto the battlefield for his father, while cheering him on loudly. "Daddy, charge! Kill them all!"

Mu Yazhe unleashed all his strength as he attacked the uncle-nephew pair continuously.

The snowballs his younger son made were of excellent quality. Their offensive power was strong, thus increasing their attack attribute.

Yun Shishi's stomach began to hurt from all the laughter as she watched this.

How could they be considered snowballs?

They were more like ice balls!

Little Yichen and Gong Jie's fighting strength was considered first-class, especially the uncle. He was an adult, after all. Therefore, his capability was equivalent to Mu Yazhe's. The boy was at least worth half of his father's fighting ability. The two had good chemistry as they both attacked heavily, but as both were standing on the frontline, their ammunition supply was quite low. Therefore, both teams were actually equally matched.

Youyou was overjoyed as he watched the battle while making snowballs.

Yun Shishi's heart ached a little for her younger son, but she broke out into a gratified smile soon enough.

Disregarding the agitating matters that had happened earlier and letting her heart settle, a simple form of happiness rose involuntarily in her as she watched her family have fun in the backyard.

Her younger son had probably not played in such a carefree manner for a long time, had he?

When he was much younger, many of his peers would run out of their houses and engage in snowball fights when it was winter. In the past, this fella would cling onto the windows and observe them enviously. Due to his health, he could only admire them from afar as he was ordered to stay home.

Now, things were different.

With Gong Jie, Little Yichen, and Mu Yazhe being his playmates, he probably did not feel as lonely this winter.

The backyard was charged with explosives and the flames of battle raged across the area.

The uncle-nephew duo fought fiercely side by side, while Mu Yazhe also unleashed his firepower, fighting head to head with two by himself.

The four were extremely competitive. They would give it their all even if it was just a game without leaving their opponents any opportunity to win. It was as if the word 'lenient' did not exist in their vocabulary.

Seeing that his dad could not be taken down, Little Yichen quickly began to aim at Youyou. Therefore, he picked up his snowballs and began to attack his little brother.

Pong! The younger boy let out a yelp as he was caught off guard by a snowball hitting him squarely in the head. He fell to the ground but picked himself up hurriedly. He took shelter from his fort and began to strike back at his older brother.

Chapter 2227: Snowball Fight (4)

Yun Shishi could not help but be eager to give it a try after feeling excited from watching them. Therefore, she put on her gloves and scarf, then sneakily ran into the courtyard.

Without thinking, she joined Youyou's team.

Seeing that she had come, Youyou grew excited. "Mommy, you came as well!"

"Yes! I'll play with you, alright?"

"Okay!"

Gong Jie and Mu Yazhe were equally matched in strength. As the two tall and strong men fought each other, they did not notice the arrival of an additional help on Youyou's team.

The woman picked up a snowball and threw it at her brother.

The snowball hit Gong Jie's neck squarely. As he did not have a scarf around that part of his body, the snowball flew past his collar and right into his shirt.

The icy snowball slid into his shirt and stuck against his warm body. The sudden coldness caused him to jump around for a bit before he turned his head back ferociously, only to see his sister beaming with joy at him. She had even curled her finger provocatively. *Give me all you got!*

“Sis, you’re cheating!” Gong Jie wailed indignantly. “It’s not fair when it is three against two!”

“That’s right, mommy! You’re biased for helping lil’ bro instead of me!”

Little Yichen gazed at her with crinkled lips. He seemed to have been utterly wronged for he sobbed tearlessly!

Seeing this, Yun Shishi could not bear to go against her older son anymore. Very quickly, she changed sides and picked up a snowball to throw at her husband, instead.

Wholly assuming that she was their teammate, Mu Yazhe had his guard lowered against her and totally did not anticipate this surprise assault from his group. Since he had been ambushed by his ally, he did not hold back and began to chase after his wife with snowballs in hand.

Youyou piled a bunch of snowballs as he joined the fray.

However, due to Yun Shishi’s participation, the team’s exceptional balance was broken. Now, there was no clear distinction between the teams anymore.

In the courtyard, she quickly changed sides again and began to throw snowballs at her brother with her younger son, but how could Gong Jie bear to hit her? Therefore, he settled for unleashing all his power on his brother-in-law.

Mu Yazhe chased his older son as he hurled snowballs consistently at him.

As Little Yichen could not win against his father, he naturally targeted his younger twin.

They began to chase one another, throwing snowballs at the other until they were just a pile of mess.

The snowballs flew across the sky as the snowflakes floated down elegantly. Everyone was incomparably cheerful as cries of joy filled the air.

“Uncle, don’t run!”

“Ahh, mommy! quickly catch up to me!”

“Ahhh! Wow! It’s so cold! The snowball went into my shirt—”

Little Yichen ran and ran. All of a sudden, he tripped over the snow fort Youyou had built earlier and fell head-first onto the ground.

The younger sibling, who was chasing the boy, could not stop himself in time. He tripped over his older brother’s ‘prone figure on the ground and fell on top of him like a human boulder.

The older one instantly felt something heavy dropping on him before he sank a few inches further into the snow.

Seeing this, their mother burst into laughter. Alas, just as she did, a snowball thrown by her brother flew straight into her widened mouth.

“Oof!”

She instantly swallowed a mouthful of snow.

Seeing this, her husband got furious. “How dared you bully my wife?!”

He bent over and speedily picked up four snowballs before hurling them fiercely at his brother-in-law’s face. Unable to dodge them in time, Gong Jie was smacked right on and collapsed to the ground.

Yun Shishi seized this chance to bombard her sibling’s toppled figure with a bunch of snowballs.

“Wahhh! Stop hitting me!” earnestly pleaded her brother.

How could she let him off, though?!

Chapter 2228: Snowball Fight (5)

How could she let him off, though?!

Yun Shishi immediately took a few snowballs and threw them at him fiercely.

Mu Yazhe could not bear to watch this go on anymore, so he threw a snowball at his wife.

This time, it was her turn to have a backyard be on fire. She glared at her husband furiously, and the couple began to fight like local tyrants.

The man could not bear to be harsh with her, so he ran away passively while being hit by her.

Seeing that someone was finally willing to stand up against their arrogant daddy, Little Yichen cheered as he watched from the side. Gong Jie, who had crawled up speedily, joined hands with his older nephew to chase after his brother-in-law, whacking him painfully with snowballs.

The pitiful man was being attacked by the trio all at once.

As Youyou stood up and witnessed this scene, he shook his head and sighed with heartache. “Daddy is so pitiful.”

Just as he finished his words, he picked up a snowball and joined his mother in attacking his father.

Mu Yazhe’s backyard was on fire at this moment as he was chased by four individuals.

In the end, as he was unable to make snowballs in time, he directly grabbed snow from the ground instead and threw this at his four chasers.

He was no God, though. No matter how strong he was, he could not win against the attacks of four people.

Moreover, the team had individuals like his brother-in-law and older son who had extreme fighting prowess. Very soon, he fell to the ground in defeat from all their combined assaults.

“Ha ha ha—”

Little Yichen felt as if he had vented his resentment and clapped his hands to end things.

As Mu Yazhe stood up gloomily, Gong Jie dashed forward to wipe snow onto his face.

“Ha ha ha—”

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The five people returned home after finishing their snowball fight.

Little Yichen blurted that his hands were cold and wanted to submerge them in a basin of hot water.

His mother immediately stopped him. “You can’t use hot water. It’s easy to get frostbite if you put your hands in hot water after playing with snow!”

“But my hands are cold!” complained the boy pitifully.

Yun Shishi crouched in front of him and held his hands gently. She began to rub his small hands carefully as she blew hot puffs of air on them. “Is this better?”

“Yup! It feels better!”

She smiled at him as she continued rubbing his hands.

Alas, not a while later, two pairs of hands were placed audaciously in front of her.

Flabbergasted, she raised her head, only to see her brother and younger son standing in front of her. Her brother beamed at her as he acted coy. “Sis, my hands are cold, too; please help me rub them.”

He was jealous of his older nephew receiving special treatment, so he itched for his sister’s gentle care, too.

However, before the woman could react, a huge pair of hands reached over to cover her brother’s.

The corners of Gong Jie’s mouth twitched harshly before turning his gaze expressionlessly onto Mu Yazhe, who had grabbed his hands coldly and began rubbing them. “I’ll help you heat them up.”

“No thanks.” He snatched his hands away resentfully with a face full of disdain.

“Ha ha! Uncle despises daddy!” Youyou laughed.

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After resting for a while, Yun Shishi brought the dumpling skins and dumpling filling to the table as she summoned them all. “It’s time to wrap dumplings!”

The highlight of the New Year’s Eve was wrapping dumplings together as one family.

The two male adults sat down as well to wrap dumplings.

However, as both were men who had never done household chores before, much less to cook in the kitchen, how would they know how to wrap dumplings? The two were at a loss as they picked up the dumpling skins.

“How should the dumplings be wrapped?”

Chapter 2229: Making Dumplings Together

“Daddy, lemme teach you.”

The younger boy laid down the dumpling skin and used the chopsticks to spread out the fillings in the center like a pro. True enough, the shape of a fat dumpling could be seen in no time.

“Mommy, why do we eat dumplings during the New Year?”

Yun Shishi tried to explain it to the older boy. “This is called the ‘New Year dumplings’. As the dumplings are shaped like ingots, eating these will bear auspiciousness. It means inviting wealth to roll into the house. The roundness of the dumplings will also signify a harmonious family. The fillings we use for the dumplings on the eve of the New Year are made with meat to make them look round and full; all in all, we are wishing for the family to have a fulfilling and peaceful year ahead.”

Little Yichen nodded in half-comprehension. “I see! I didn’t know of such sayings.”

The woman taught the boy, step by step, how to prepare the dumplings. Once she was done, she turned to see her brother staring at the ingredients with a sullen look on his face. He knew nothing about cooking.

Meanwhile, Mu Yazhe did his first dumpling under his younger son’s guidance. Unfortunately, it could only be considered half-assed at best. The dumpling was too soggy, with the content seeping through the skin.

“Daddy, you’re so stupid.” Youyou had a spiteful look on his face.

His father was spontaneously crushed by his son’s criticism and retorted ruefully, “I’ve never made a dumpling in my life.”

“Well, this is my first time, too, but look at how good it turns out!” His son refused to give him some face.

The adult had a look of utter defeat this time.

By then, Yun Shishi had sat next to her brother. She guided him, bit by bit, on making dumplings. Under her patient tutelage, he was soon making some decent-looking dumplings.

The day slipped by, and soon, it was evening 6 PM.

Yun Yecheng came downstairs to find the dumplings ready on the table.

His daughter and youngest grandson were busy in the kitchen with the son-in-law helping them. The older boy was in the living room watching a program on TV with his uncle.

The annual new year countdown had yet to be shown on TV, but the station was already warming up to the event by replaying last year’s celebratory program.

Oh, where are Xiang Yu and her daughters?

The old man noticed that the trio was no longer around and simply assumed that they had gone home of their accord.

The Chinese New Year's Eve dinner was finally ready at 7 PM.

The woman stood at the door looking around the neighborhood, but Hua Jin was nowhere to be seen.

Has he forgotten about our appointment?

Feeling somewhat downcast, she walked back to her room.

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Hua Jin followed the address given by Yun Shishi and called a cab to Xiangti Walk accordingly. He finally found the location after walking a distance. At the door, he could see the festive atmosphere inside the hall through the full-length, see-through window.

Six individuals were seated around a dining table, looking all happy. Envy rose inside him as he watched the festivity within the house.

How he longed for such company and warmth!

How many years have I missed the New Year celebration?

In fact, as far as he could remember, he had never celebrated the New Year.

He had no home of his own to begin with. Hence, being able to spend a heartwarming family reunion like this was just wistful thinking on his part.

He walked to the door and was about to press the doorbell when he held back his hand, seemingly afraid.

Furrowing his brows, he knew he had no courage to follow through the action. Somewhat guilt-stricken, he retracted his hand and blew a mouthful of hot air on his palms before rubbing both lightly to keep them warm.

The snow was getting heavy outside the house, and it appeared capable of covering the land with the countless cotton flakes floating down.

He stood for a long time outside the door in his coat and scarf. Falling snowflakes landed on his torso and face, as well as his eyelashes, but these were soon whisked away by the wind as he blinked his eyes lightly. The longer he stood there, the more worried he became. He did not think that they would welcome his presence even though he longed to join them.

Chapter 2230: A Coward

He longed to join them yet dared not go forward. Slowly, he retreated and returned to the front yard. As he quietly watched the loving scene inside the house through the see-through window, he felt like a foreigner who had no place to call his home. Even though he wanted to be part of them, he wondered if he had the right to enjoy such love.

I doubt I'll be welcome here, right?

He dared not imagine the suspicion, hesitation, or derision that might come his way when he walked in. The mere thought was enough to send him into fits of panic. He was too awkward and nervous to do anything more. He was not only afraid but also lost and dejected.

Can I qualify to be included in this heartwarming circle?

Because of his anxiety, he could not muster up the courage to take a step forward. Turning around, he was about to flee from this place like a defeated soldier. Just then, a voice was heard from behind him.

“Hua Jin!”

He halted in his tracks and looked back with surprise.

Unbeknown to him, Yun Shishi had appeared at the entrance with the door open. Her face had a look of pleasant delight as she exclaimed petulantly, “Why are you late!”

“I—”

He was at a loss for words, unsure of what to say.

He was here for some time, but a strange sense of cowardice had him pacing outside the house. Still, he was unable to pluck up the courage to enter the place.

The lady walked toward him and held his hand. “Why are you so late? Everyone’s waiting for your arrival so that dinner can be served! Come in quickly!”

“Shishi—”

Before he could say anything more, the woman was already leading him into the house by the hand.

“W-Wait...”

The young man was still hesitant; he did not move despite her urging and even looked ill at ease.

Startled, the lady host turned around and clearly caught his forlorn look; she could feel her heart aching for him instantly.

“Will the rest... accept me?”

She was saddened by the wounded look on his face. Just then, the chap quickly added in a muted tone.

“I’m afraid... I’ll disturb your family... so perhaps I should just leave—”

“What are you talking about?” She squeezed his hand gently and flashed him a bright smile. “Everyone’s been waiting for you.”

This one statement from her was sufficient to melt his heart.

Staring at her in wide-eyed disbelief, he asked, “Really?”

“Yes!” She eagerly affirmed it. “We’re just waiting for you. After dinner, we’ll go to the lake to light some fireworks. We’ve agreed to this long ago, so you must keep your promise.”

Something broke through in his heart as he felt a gush of warmth flooding him from within.

The lady did not wait to hear any more protest from the young man this time and just led him straight into the house.

He followed her obediently without struggle or avoidance at this point.

The heater was working well inside the spacious hall. As he was bathed in a sea of warm lights from this abode, his mind went blank at once. He did not know how to react to the people sitting around the dining table!

“Hey, sorry to keep everybody waiting. Let me introduce my friend here; he’s called Hua Jin.”

The older boy was the first to stand up and speak. “Oh, that’s right! Mommy mentioned that her friend would be joining us tonight. Are you referring to Brother Hua Jin, mommy? I know him! He’s the male lead in the period drama, ‘Lethal Beauty!’”

The younger lad was somewhat surprised to hear that a friend of his mommy would be joining them but was friendly, nonetheless, greeting the visitor politely, “Brother Hua Jin!”